



The VA is in step four, Market Plan Development, of the nine-step national CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Service) process.

In late November 2002, initial CARES Planning Initiatives, gaps between the services we provide now and the projected need in 2012 and 2022, were identified. Shortly after receiving its Planning Initiatives, VISN3 CARES teams began meeting with stakeholders (e.g. veterans, VSOs, employees, unions, affiliates, etc.) to develop draft market plans that respond to the gaps.

This month, VISN3 received an updated list of Planning Initiatives that reflect the rerunning of the CARES data with recently received 2000 Census information and the projected impact of suspended Priority 8 enrollment for the remainder of FY'03. The revised Planning Initiatives also reflect the potential impact of policy proposals included within the Administration's recommended 2004 VA budget (e.g. those involving eligibility/co-payments for health services).

At this time, it is not believed that the rerunning of the CARES data will make a significant difference in the initial draft Market Plans. VISN 3 CARES teams are analyzing the newly identified Planning Initiatives and are making plans to meet with stakeholders about the new information.

After each VISN market team and their veteran leaders and stakeholders develop a plan, the teams will come together to develop and finalize a VISN plan to meet all identified planning initiatives. During this process, the teams will continue to ask for stakeholder input.

By April 15, 2003, VISN 3 will forward its CARES Market Plans to the National CARES Program Office, where they will be integrated into a draft National CARES Plan that VA clinical leaders and an independent CARES Commission will review. The Commission will also consider views and concerns during a 60-day public comment period and in public hearings it holds. The final CARES Plan will then be submitted to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, who will announce his decision in October 2003.

Information about the CARES Process may be found on the VISN3 webpage, where stakeholders may also provide comments or feedback. Visit the site at <http://www.va.gov/visns/visn03>.